



# AETC News Clips

## Randolph AFB, Texas



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### Training stop on road to Iraq

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**Sig Christenson**  
**Express-News Military Writer**

Airman Derrall Peach held a map in one hand and cradled a phone receiver in the other as a truck blurred by on a dirt road, dust and diesel fumes swirling.

The truck ahead blocked a fork in the road, allowing Peach, Staff Sgt. Bruce Bohne and Airman 1st Class Dan Moran the chance to safely lead the convoy.

They threaded a back road full of endless, unpleasant possibilities in the No. 1 gun truck — the most likely vehicle to be hit by a roadside bomb in distant Iraq.

The good news was that the road was on Camp Bullis, in North Bexar County.

The bad news is that they'll soon escort convoys for real.

"So far, pretty good," Moran, 20, of Syracuse, N.Y., said when asked how the day's training exercise had gone. "I personally haven't seen any action. I'd like to."

It's been a bit boring. The mock roadside bomb didn't go off when it was supposed to, and when it did there was no explosion. Still, as the guy behind a big machine gun in the Humvee turret, it's a safe bet that Moran has the most dangerous job and that in time he'll see some action.

Three weeks into Lackland AFB's Basic Combat Convoy Course, Moran says he can't wait to run the roads of Iraq. Friday, he and about 175 other airmen will graduate from the BC-3 course. The program started in June 2004 and has sent 1,675 graduates to convoy duty in Iraq.

Their next stops are Oklahoma and Kuwait, where they'll get final exams before doing this job for real.

BC-3 prepares airmen for a task once done by the Army — guarding convoys that carry food, fuel, water and equipment to dozens of forward operating bases scattered across Iraq.

It is not a mission airmen imagined doing two years ago, when a short-handed Army turned to the Air Force and Navy to augment convoys.

BC-3's alumni have served with distinction since the first class graduated. They've logged 4,000 miles, 8,000 missions and 6,000 engagements with insurgents. And they've racked up 180 Bronze Stars and 100 Purple Hearts.

They've also paid the price: four airmen killed, one of them Staff Sgt. Brian McElroy, a 28-year-old Churchill High School graduate who died in January.

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Taking the point is always risky, but the task has earned a reputation among some troops in Iraq. It's grounded in the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, which have become the greatest threat to U.S. and coalition forces.

Last year alone, 10,593 IED attacks were recorded by the U.S., almost twice that of 2004.

The attacks can be surprisingly brief, no more than 90 seconds, and can occur once every few weeks, said Master Sgt. Martin Lund, BC-3's superintendent and a veteran of eight months of convoy duty in Iraq.

Ambushes, once isolated to the Sunni Triangle, now occur everywhere.

It is into this strange world that Peach, Bohne and Moran will find themselves this summer. They'll spend seven to 10 days on the road, going from one base to the next. Peach's crew has trained for that.

Some like it. Others don't.

Asked if he wants to go to Iraq, the seemingly laid-back Peach, 21, of Las Vegas, replied, "Not really. I have a family at home."

At 25, Bohne has a wife and two children — Caleb is 3. Brianna's a week old. He's ready to pull convoy duty for the next six months, explaining that it's better than just guarding a base.

"I'd rather get out than be a hermit," said Bohne, of Shaw AFB, S.C., adding that his wife, Paula, is nervous.

"She's understands it. She's just worried."



# AETC News Clips

## Luke AFB, Ariz.



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A-3 West Valley View, Litchfield Park, Arizona, Friday, March 31, 2006

View photo by Michael Clawson

**AIRMEN ANDREW BELL, LEFT, AND AARON BARRETT** identify parts on an F-16 jet engine at Luke Air Force Base. The airmen are students

in the Mission Ready Airman program, which teaches airmen to become crew chiefs.

## Ready jet go



*West Valley View follows Luke Air Force Base crew chiefs in training*

by Andrea Hoehne  
staff writer

Everyone knows who Maverick is in the '80s movie classic, *Top Gun*. He's the pilot in a fighter jet — dangerous, thrilling and extremely romantic.

But what about the guys with the oversized headphones who pulled the blocks from the wheels of his jet so he could take off? What about the men who made sure his jet operated properly so that he could do his inverted, hot-shot tricks in the air?

At Luke Air Force Base, those men are called crew chiefs, or maintainers. They are responsible for the well-being of a pilot and his jet. They must know everything there is to know about a jet and its mechanics.

Generally, these young men and women are about 19 or 20 years old when the military entrusts them with a \$30 million jet, not to mention a human life or two.

Luke trains hundreds of the men each year in a Mission Ready Airman program. During the installation's 2005 fiscal year, 489 crew chiefs graduated. However, Luke has up to 1,000 graduates each year.

In fact, the program, which trains crew chiefs to master F-16s, is the largest Field Training Detachment in the Air Force.

"And it's the best," if you ask them.

### How it works

After basic training, future crew chiefs spend six months in classroom training at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, where they learn from textbooks and work on broken jets.

Next, they head to Luke for the Mission Ready Airman program that was established in August 1994 to give crew chiefs practical experience before dealing with jets that contain pilots.

Nearly every week a new class of airmen begins the four-week training that puts their hands on jets from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for 20 days of actual instruction time.

The group that started on Thursday has only five members, a relatively small class in comparison to others. And their ages

combined total just 118 years.

Through this collection of young men, the View readers will get an insider's look at what it takes to become a crew chief, and be able to follow them through their four weeks at Luke.

First, Andrew Bell is a 20-year-old from Howard, Ga., population 43 — or, well, 42 now that he left.

"I went from working on tractors to fighter jets," Bell said with a thick Georgia accent.

Next, Jason McMicken, is also 20 years old, and from Binghamton, N.Y.

"This is the job I wanted," McMicken said of becoming an F-16 crew chief.

Upon joining the Air Force, the men filled out "dream sheets" and specified the jobs they would like. All of them wanted to be crew chiefs. Well, all except one.

That one would be the "older man" in the group, Sgt. Clayton Lemons, 39, of Houston. Lemons is just cross training as part of his orders from the National Guard. He has been an F-16 engine mechanic for seven years, and is now transitioning into a new job.

"I had to be an F-16 crew chief to stay in this job," Lemons said.

Lemons is one of two married men in the class. Oddly enough, the other one is also the youngest, at 19 years old.

Theodor Johnston is from Detroit and he joined the Air Force because he was ready to leave home.

"I just wanted to get out of the city, and see the world," Johnston said.

And see the world he will. Johnston's next step after Phoenix is Italy.

Finally, rounding out the group is Aaron Barrett, 20, from Durham, N.C.

Though Barrett did get his job of choice — crew chief — he didn't get his plane of choice, the F-22.

"I was wanting the F-22, it's the newest," Barrett said, though he's not disappointed by the F-16. "F-16s are amazing. They're easily the coolest looking of them all."



View photo by Michael Clawson

**AIRMAN THEODOR JOHNSTON**, a Mission Ready Airman student, uses a flashlight to identify parts on an F-16 jet engine at Luke Air Force Base. Mission Ready Airman graduates go on to become crew chiefs, or maintainers, at military bases around the country.

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azcentral.com

## Definition of 'pork' a little iffy

Mar. 31, 2006 12:00 AM

Even though "pork" has never been scientifically defined, the inference from your editorial on Sunday seems to be that if Sen. John McCain does it, it's OK, and if anybody else does it, then it becomes pork and must be stopped ("Rehnquist center is no pork project").

Our government is running a deficit of a lot more billions than I would care to count and if every member of Congress has a \$10 million hometown "national need" that isn't pork by McCain's definition, that deficit isn't going to get any smaller.

I remember a few years ago seeing a picture of McCain in *The Republic* taking full credit for bringing home a few million in tax dollars to keep Luke Air Force Base open. I do not have an opinion on whether Luke should be here, but McCain caved to the pressures of local politicians and groups who wanted it open mainly for the economic impact it has on the area.

No area wants to see their base closed, but I strongly object to McCain spending our money to keep Luke open while at the same time we, the taxpayers, were spending money on a base-closure committee.

I fail to see how a "national need" based on the movie *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* can be anything but pork.

If McCain runs for president in 2008, I will probably vote for him, not because of his "pork" stance, but because of who would be running against him. - **Alex Thurber, Buckeye**

*AZ Central.com*

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